IN THE CLAIMS

Please cancel claims 8-11, 16-17, 29-34, 49-50, 55-56, 70-71, 76, 81-83, 85-86, 96, 98-101, 104-105, 115-127, 131-132, 148-149, and 159-219 without prejudice. Claims 220-227 are new.

Please amend the following claims which are pending in the present application:

CLAIMS

1. (Currently amended) A gaming console having a display ~~means~~, and a game controller ~~control means~~ arranged to control images displayed on the display ~~means~~, the game controller ~~control means~~ being arranged to play a game wherein one or more random events are caused to be displayed on the display ~~means~~ and, if a predefined winning event or combination of events results, the machine awards a prize, the console being characterized in that an animated character is periodically displayed to communicate information to the player, the character being arranged to appear superimposed over any game screen currently displayed at the time the character is displayed, the character appearing to award a bonus prize or appearing to dispense or control the dispensing of the prize.

2. (Original) The console as claimed in claim 1, wherein bonus prizes are awarded from a bonus prize pool.

3. (Original) The console as claimed in claim 1, wherein the character is generally in the shape of a coin.

4. (Currently amended) The console as claimed in claim 3, wherein the character is provided with at least one of a group including glasses, top hat, legs and arms.

5. (Original) The console as claimed in claim 1, wherein the character is animated.

6. (Original) The console as claimed in claim 5, wherein the animated character is used to indicate to the player any game and feature prizes won as a result of playing the respective game in addition to the bonus prizes awarded by the character.

7. (Original) The console as claimed in claim 1, wherein the character will occasionally randomly appear, entering the game screen, and awarding a variable random bonus prize.

8.-11. (Cancelled)

12. (Original) The console as claimed in claim 1, wherein a function or feature which is triggered will not commence until after the completion of the entire game in progress when the trigger occurred.

13. (Original) The console as claimed in claim 12, wherein the selected function or feature commences before the player has been given the opportunity to bet on another game.

14. (Currently amended) The console as claimed in claim 1, wherein the character is associated with an audio output which includes at least one of music and other sound effects to draw attention to the presence of the character~~, as well as~~ and a voice output to communicate messages to the player.

15. (Currently amended) The console as claimed in claim 1 [[14]], wherein the character ~~also~~ delivers visual messages in the form of symbols and/or text.

16.-17. (Cancelled)

18. (Currently amended) The console as claimed in claim 1, wherein the triggering of the character to appear is achieved by at least one ~~any one or more~~ of the following events:

(a) a periodic trigger;

(b) a random trigger;

(c) the occurrence of an external trigger event;

(d) the occurrence of one or more specific game states;

(e) the occurrence of one or more specific console states~~;~~

~~(f) a specific operator activity;~~

~~(g) a specific player activity~~.

19. (Currently amended) The console as claimed in claim 1, wherein the triggering of the character to appear is achieved by at least one ~~any one or more~~ of the following events:

(a) the occurrence of a game state where the player must make a decision where the character may appear, to offer advice on probabilities of various possible outcomes, this trigger may be automatic or prompted by the player pressing a button;

(b) the offering of bonus prizes as incentives to players who have had long non-winning stretches;

(c) the offering game specific bonus features to players who have had a long stretch where the game specific bonus feature has not been awarded;

(d) announcing a bonus game or a series of games awarded to the player;

(e) announcing the winning of a mystery jackpot, either on the winning console, or a console adjacent the winning console;

(f) providing wins in "near-miss" situations by "nudging" a symbol into a winning position;

(g) suggesting the ordering of a taxi for a player who has been observed to have been present for a long period or whose play is erratic and may indicate intoxication;

(h) periodically offer drink or food ordering services; [[or]]

(i) periodically provide public service information and information on services, facilities and entertainment programs offered to patrons; or

(j) advising a player when the console had detected a fault condition in which case the ~~interface~~ character will explain the fault to the player.

20. (Currently amended) The console as claimed in claim 1, wherein the character is arranged to appear on a bank of consoles in a coordinated manner ~~to perform system functions~~.

21. (Original) The console as claimed in claim 20, wherein the character appears simultaneously on all of the consoles in a bank.

22. (Original) The console as claimed in claim 20, wherein the character only appears on one of the consoles in the bank at any one time.

23. (Currently amended) The console as claimed in claim 20, wherein the character is animated to <u>progress</u> ~~walk~~ from one console to the next, disappearing from one screen as it appears on the next ~~, such that it duplicates the function of a club employee patrolling the bank of consoles and offering bonuses~~.

24. (Currently amended) The console as claimed in claim 20 [[23]], wherein, when a player wins a jackpot, the character announces the win to players playing consoles in the vicinity of the winning player's console.

25. (Currently amended) The console as claimed in claim 20 [[23]], wherein, when the character appears on one of the consoles in a bank of consoles, to award a bonus, the character simultaneously announces its presence to players playing on other consoles in the same bank of consoles.

26. (Currently amended) The console as claimed in claim 1, wherein, the ~~player interface~~ character initiates tournaments by a appearing on each console eligible for the tournament to instruct or advise the player of each of those consoles.

27. (Currently amended) A gaming console having a display ~~means~~, and a game controller ~~control means~~ arranged to control images displayed on the display ~~means~~, the game controller ~~control means~~ being arranged to play a game bought by a player wherein after the player buys a game by committing a wager, one or more random events are caused to be displayed on the display ~~means~~ and, if a predefined winning event or combination of events results, the machine

awards a prize, the console being characterized in that an animated character is periodically displayed to communicate information to the player, the character being arranged to appear superimposed over any game screen currently displayed at the time the character is displayed, the character appearing to award a bonus game or a bonus feature, where the bonus game or bonus feature has an outcome which is at least partially independent of the outcome of the current game bought by ~~buy~~ the player.

28. (Original) The console as claimed in claim 27, wherein the character causes an animated spinning reel bonus game to be initiated in which one or more of a plurality of simulated reels, each carrying a plurality of symbols, are caused to randomly spin and stop, and if a predetermined combination of symbols is displayed a prize associated with the combination is awarded.

29.-31. (Cancelled)

32. (Currently amended) The console as claimed in claim 28, wherein the animation of the character causing the reel to spin will include the character activating ~~pushing~~ each of the reels to be spun.

33.-34. (Cancelled)

35. (Original) The console as claimed in claim 27, wherein a feature is provided in which the character offers a selection between two or more options with different offers of hidden prizes or bonus games being associated with each option such that when the player chooses one of the options the hidden offer associated with the selected option is revealed and awarded to the player.

36. (Original) The console as claimed in claim 35, wherein the feature comprises the character holding two objects and offering the player a choice between the two objects.

37. (Currently amended) The console as claimed in claim 36, wherein the objects are a money representation ~~bag of coins~~ and a box representation ~~wad of dollar bills~~.

38. (Currently amended) The console as claimed in claim 37, wherein the player is asked to choose one or the other of the money representation ~~bag of coins~~ or the box representation ~~wad of notes~~.

39. (Currently amended) The console as claimed in claim 38, wherein, if ~~a first~~ one of the objects is chosen, it will reveal that the player has been awarded a number of free games of the type offered as standard games on the console, and a multiplier will be applied to all prizes won during those free games.

40. (Currently amended) The console as claimed in claim 38 [[39]], wherein if ~~a second~~ one of the object is chosen, a variable prize will be determined from a range of possible prizes.

41. (Original) The console as claimed in claim 27, wherein the feature is a second-screen feature displayed after the end of the main game.

42. (Currently amended) The console as claimed in claim 27, wherein the character ~~enters a game and~~ randomly awards a game feature specific to the game being played.

43. (Currently amended) The console as claimed in claim 27 [[42]], wherein the standard game includes a feature where the occurrence of three scatter symbols in a combination resulting from a bought game acts as a trigger event which causes the awarding of a plurality of free bonus games ~~with all wins~~

~~occurring in the bonus games being multiplied by a predetermined amount~~ and in the bonus feature the character enters the game and awards the plurality of free games to the player.

44. (Original) The console as claimed in claim 27, wherein the character enters the game screen of an animated spinning reel game at random intervals, and while the reels are spinning as part of a bought game he will indicate one of the spinning reels to be treated as a bonus reel in this game, and when the reels stop spinning, the indicated reel will be treated as having stopped on a wild symbol which substitutes for all symbols on that reel.

45. (Currently amended) The console as claimed in claim 44, wherein the bonus reel will be indicated by the character climbing into the foreground <u>of</u> that reel.

46. (Original) The console as claimed in claim 27, wherein the character enters a bought game after the reels have stopped spinning and any prizes have been awarded for the bought game and the character then commences all of the reels spinning again as a bonus game, and while they are spinning will indicate the reel to be treated as a bonus reel and when the reels stop spinning, the indicated

reel will be treated as having stopped on a wild symbol which substitutes for all symbols on that reel.

47. (Currently amended) The console as claimed in claim 46, wherein the bonus reel will be indicated by the character climbing into the foreground of that reel.

48. (Currently amended) The console as claimed in claim 27, wherein the character enters a bought game after the reels have stopped spinning and any prizes have been awarded for the bought game and the character then ~~jumps onto a reel of the game and~~ replaces each occurrence of one symbol type with a special symbol for the next game, the special symbol providing a different set of award possibilities to those offered by the replaced symbols.

49.-50. (Cancelled)

51. (Original) The console as claimed in claim 27, wherein a function or feature which is triggered will not commence until after the completion of the entire game in progress when the trigger occurred.

52. (Original) The console as claimed in claim 51, wherein the selected function or feature commences before the player has been given the opportunity to bet on another game.

53. (Currently amended) The console as claimed in claim 27, wherein the character is associated with an audio output which includes at least one of music and other sound effects to draw attention to the presence of the character~~, as well as~~ and a voice output to communicate messages to the player.

54. (Currently amended) The console as claimed in claim 27 [[53]], wherein the character ~~also~~ delivers visual messages in the form of symbols and/or text.

55.-56. (Cancelled)

57. (Currently amended) The console as claimed in claim 27, wherein the triggering of the character to appear is achieved by at least one ~~any one or more~~ of the following events:

(a) a periodic trigger;

(b) a random trigger;

(c) the occurrence of an external trigger event;

(d) the occurrence of one or more specific game states;

(e) the occurrence of one or more specific console states.[[;]]

~~(f) a specific operator activity;~~

~~(g) a specific player activity.~~

58. (Currently amended) The console as claimed in claim 27, wherein the triggering of the character to appear is achieved by at least one ~~any one or more~~ of the following events:

(a) the occurrence of a game state where the player must make a decision where the character may appear, to offer advice on probabilities of various possible outcomes, this trigger may be automatic or prompted by the player pressing a button;

(b) the offering of bonus prizes as incentives to players who have had long non-winning stretches;

(c) the offering game specific bonus features to players who have had a long stretch where the game specific bonus feature has not been awarded

(d) announcing a bonus game or a series of games awarded to the player;

(e) announcing the winning of a mystery jackpot, either on the winning console, or a console adjacent the winning console;

(f) providing wins in "near-miss" situations by "nudging" a symbol into a winning position;

(g) suggesting the ordering of a taxi for a player who has been observed to have been present for a long period or whose play is erratic and may indicate intoxication;

(h) periodically offer drink or food ordering services; [[or]]

(i) periodically provide public service information and information on services, facilities and entertainment programs offered to patrons; or

(j) advising a player when the console had detected a fault condition in which case the ~~interface~~ character will explain the fault to the player.

59. (Currently amended) The console as claimed in claim 27, wherein the character is arranged to appear on a bank of consoles in a coordinated manner ~~to perform system functions~~.

60. (Original) The console as claimed in claim 59, wherein the character appears simultaneously on all of the consoles in a bank.

61. (Original) The console as claimed in claim 59, wherein the character only appears on one of the consoles in the bank at any one time.

62. (Currently amended) The console as claimed in claim 59, wherein the character is animated to progress ~~walk~~ from one console to the next, disappearing from one screen as it appears on the next~~, such that it duplicates the function of a club employee patrolling the bank of consoles and offering bonuses~~.

63. (Currently amended) The console as claimed in claim 59 [[62]], wherein, when a player wins a jackpot, the character announces the win to players playing consoles in the vicinity of the winning player's console.

64. (Currently amended) The console as claimed in claim 59 [[62]], wherein, when the character appears on one of the consoles in a bank of consoles, to award a bonus, the character simultaneously announces its presence to players playing on other consoles in the same bank of consoles.

65. (Currently amended) The console as claimed in claim 27, wherein, the ~~player interface~~ character initiates tournaments by a appearing on each console eligible for the tournament to instruct or advise the player of each of those consoles.

66. (Currently amended) A gaming console having a display ~~means~~, and a game controller ~~control means~~ arranged to control images displayed on the display ~~means~~, the game controller ~~control means~~ being arranged to play a game wherein one or more random events are caused to be displayed on the display ~~means~~ and, if a predefined winning event or combination of events results, the machine awards a prize, the console being characterized in that an animated character is periodically displayed to communicate information to the player, the character being arranged to appear superimposed over any game screen currently displayed at the time the character is displayed, and triggering of the appearance of the character being independent of the outcome of the current game.

67. (Original) The console as claimed in claim 66, wherein the trigger is random and weighted by a desired hit rate of the feature.

68. (Original) The console as claimed in claim 67, wherein the feature is required to be initiated on average once in every N games played, and for every time the player initiates a game by pressing a bet button a random number will be selected in the range 1 to N, and if the number 1 is selected then the feature will be triggered.

69. (Original) The console as claimed in claim 67, wherein the desired hit rate of the feature is dependent upon the size or type of the player's bet.

70.-71. (Cancelled)

72. (Currently amended) A gaming console having a display ~~means~~, and a game controller ~~control means~~ arranged to control images displayed on the display ~~means~~, the game controller ~~control means~~ being arranged to play a game wherein one or more random events are caused to be displayed on the display ~~means~~ and, if a predefined winning event or combination of events results, the machine awards a prize, the console being characterized in that an animated character is periodically displayed to communicate information to the player, the character being arranged to appear superimposed over any game screen currently displayed at the time the character is displayed, and triggering of the appearance of the character being associated with a function or feature selected from a plurality of functions or features associated with the gaming console.

73. (Original) The console as claimed in claim 72, wherein the selection of the function or feature from the plurality of functions or features is independent of the outcome of the current game.

74. (Original) The console as claimed in claim 72, wherein each different type of function or feature available in one game will have an independent, pre-determined probability of being triggered for each game played.

75. (Currently amended) The console as claimed in claim 74, wherein there are a plurality of [[5]] separate random selections, at least one of which are made whenever a player makes a bet on game, relating to a plurality of [[5]] separate bonus functions or features.

76. (Cancelled)

77. (Original) The console as claimed in claim 72, wherein a function or feature which is triggered will not commence until after the completion of the entire game in progress when the trigger occurred.

78. (Original) The console as claimed in claim 77, wherein the selected function or feature commences before the player has been given the opportunity to bet on another game.

79. (Original) The console as claimed in claim 76, wherein if more than one different function or feature is triggered from the same bet, the selected functions or features will commence one at a time such that as one is completed the next one will commence, and all of the triggered functions or features will be completed before the player is given the opportunity to bet on another game.

80. (Currently amended) The console as claimed in claim 72, wherein the game provided on the console is a video simulation[[s]] of a spinning reel game and one of the bonus features is an animated spinning reel bonus game in which one or more of a plurality of simulated reels, each carrying a plurality of symbols, are caused to randomly spin and stop, and if a predetermined combination of symbols is displayed a prize associated with the combination is awarded.

81.-83. (Cancelled)

84. (Currently amended) The console as claimed in claim 80, wherein the animation of the character causing the reel to spin will include the character activating ~~pushing~~ each of the reels to be spun.

85.-86. (Cancelled)

87. (Original) The console as claimed in claim 80, wherein, during the bonus game, while the reels are spinning, the character will indicate a reel to be treated as a bonus reel and when the reels stop spinning, the indicated reel will be treated as having stopped on a wild symbol which substitutes for all symbols on that reel.

88. (Currently amended) The console as claimed in claim 87, wherein the bonus reel will be indicated by the character climbing into the foreground of that reel.

89. (Currently amended) The console as claimed in claim 72, wherein the game provided on the console is a video simulation[[s]] of a spinning reel game and one of the bonus features is a game in which the character offers a selection between two or more options with different offers of hidden prizes or bonus

games being associated with each option such that when the player chooses one of the options the hidden offer associated with the selected option is revealed and awarded to the player.

90. (Original) The console as claimed in claim 89, wherein the feature comprises the character holding two objects and offering the player a choice between the two objects.

91. (Currently amended) The console as claimed in claim 90, wherein the objects are a money representation ~~bag of coins~~ and a box representation ~~wad of dollar bills~~.

92. (Currently amended) The console as claimed in claim 91, wherein the player is asked to choose one or the other of the money representation ~~bag of coins~~ or the box representation ~~wad of notes~~.

93. (Currently amended) The console as claimed in claim 90, wherein, if ~~a first~~ one of the objects is chosen, it will reveal that the player has been awarded a number of free games of the type offered as standard games on the console, and a multiplier will be applied to all prizes won during those free games.

94. (Currently amended) The console as claimed in claim 90 [[93]], wherein if ~~a second~~ one of the object is chosen, a variable prize will be determined from a range of possible prizes.

95. (Currently amended) The console as claimed in claim 72, wherein the game provided on the console is a video simulations of a spinning reel game and one of the bonus features is awarded by the character ~~entering the game and~~ randomly awarding a game feature specific to the game being played.

96. (Cancelled)

97. (Original) The console as claimed in claim 72, wherein the game provided on the console is a video simulations of a spinning reel game and one of the bonus features is by awarded by the character intermittently randomly appearing, entering the game screen, and awarding a variable random bonus prize.

98.-101. (Cancelled)

102. (Currently amended) The console as claimed in claim 72, wherein the character is associated with an audio output which includes at least one of music and other sound effects to draw attention to the presence of the character ~~, as well as~~ and a voice output to communicate messages to the player.

103. (Currently amended) The console as claimed in claim 72 [[102]], wherein the character ~~also~~ delivers visual messages in the form of symbols and/or text.

104.-105. (Cancelled)

106. (Currently amended) The console as claimed in claim 72, wherein the triggering of the character to appear is achieved by at least one ~~any one or more~~ of the following events:

(a) a periodic trigger;

(b) a random trigger;

(c) occurrence of an external trigger event;

(d) the occurrence of one or more specific game states;

(e) the occurrence of one or more specific console states.[[;]]

~~(f) a specific operator activity;~~

~~(g) a specific player activity.~~

107. (Currently amended) The console as claimed in claim 72, wherein the triggering of the character to appear is achieved by at least one ~~any one or more~~ of the following events:

(a) the occurrence of a game state where the player must make a decision where the character may appear, to offer advice on probabilities of various possible outcomes, this trigger may be automatic or prompted by the player pressing a button;

(b) the offering of bonus prizes as incentives to players who have had long non-winning stretches;

(c) the offering game specific bonus features to players who have had a long stretch where the game specific bonus feature has not been awarded

(d) announcing a bonus game or a series of games awarded to the player;

(e) announcing the winning of a mystery jackpot, either on the winning console, or a console adjacent the winning console;

(f) providing wins in "near-miss" situations by "nudging" a symbol into a winning position;

(g) suggesting the ordering of a taxi for a player who has been observed to have been present for a long period or whose play is erratic and may indicate intoxication; [[or]]

(h) periodically offer drink or food ordering services; or i) periodically provide public service information and information on services, facilities and entertainment programs offered to patrons; or

(j) advising a player when the console had detected a fault condition in which case the ~~interface~~ character will explain the fault to the player.

108. (Currently amended) The console as claimed in claim 72, wherein the character is arranged to appear on a bank of consoles in a coordinated manner ~~to perform system functions~~.

109. (Original) The console as claimed in claim 108, wherein the character appears simultaneously on all of the consoles in a bank.

110. (Original) The console as claimed in claim 108, wherein the character only appears on one of the consoles in the bank at any one time.

111. (Currently amended) The console as claimed in claim 108, wherein the character is animated to progress ~~walk~~ from one console to the next, disappearing from one screen as it appears on the next~~, such that it duplicates the function of a club employee patrolling the bank of consoles and offering bonuses~~.

112. (Currently amended) The console as claimed in claim 108 [[111]], wherein, when a player wins a jackpot, the character announces the win to players playing consoles in the vicinity of the winning player's console.

113. (Currently amended) The console as claimed in claim 108 [[111]], wherein, when the character appears on one of the consoles in a bank of consoles, to award a bonus, the character simultaneously announces its presence to players playing on other consoles in the same bank of consoles.

114. (Currently amended) The console as claimed in claim 72, wherein, the ~~player interface~~ character initiates tournaments by a appearing on each console eligible for the tournament to instruct or advise the player of each of those consoles.

115.-127. (Cancelled)

128. (Currently amended) A gaming console having a display ~~means~~, and a game controller ~~control means~~ arranged to control images displayed on the display ~~means~~, the game controller ~~control means~~ being arranged to play a game

wherein one or more symbols are randomly selected as a combination of symbols and displayed on the display ~~means~~ and, if a winning combination results, the machine awards a prize, the console being characterized in that an animated character is periodically displayed to communicate information to the player, the character being independent of and appearing asynchronously with respect to the game being played and arranged to appear superimposed over any game screen currently displayed at the time the character is displayed.

129. (Currently amended) The console as claimed in claim 128, wherein the character is associated with an audio output which includes at least one of music and other sound effects to draw attention to the presence of the character~~, as well as~~ and a voice output to communicate messages to the player.

130. (Currently amended) The console as claimed in claim 128 [[129]], wherein the character ~~also~~ delivers visual messages in the form of symbols and/or text.

131.-132. (Cancelled)

133. (Currently amended) The console as claimed in claim 128, wherein the triggering of the character to appear is achieved by at least one ~~any one or more~~ of the following events:

(a) a periodic trigger;

(b) a random trigger;

(c) the occurrence of an external trigger event;

(d) the occurrence of one or more specific game states;

(e) the occurrence of one or more specific console states.[[;]]

~~(f) a specific operator activity;~~

~~(g) a specific player activity.~~

134. (Currently amended) The console as claimed in claim 128, wherein the triggering of the character to appear is achieved by at least one ~~any one or more~~ of the following events:

(a) the occurrence of a game state where the player must make a decision where the character may appear, to offer advice on probabilities of various possible outcomes, this trigger may be automatic or prompted by the player pressing a button;

(b) the offering of bonus prizes as incentives to players who have had long non-winning stretches;

(c) the offering game specific bonus features to players who have had a long stretch where the game specific bonus feature has not been awarded

(d) announcing a bonus game or a series of games awarded to the player;

(e) announcing the winning of a mystery jackpot, either on the winning console, or a console adjacent the winning console;

(f) providing wins in "near-miss" situations by "nudging" a symbol into a winning position;

(g) suggesting the ordering of a taxi for a player who has been observed to have been present for a long period or whose play is erratic and may indicate intoxication;

(h) periodically offer drink or food ordering services; [[or]]

(i) periodically provide public service information and information on services, facilities and entertainment programs offered to patrons; or

(j) advising a player when the console had detected a fault condition in which case the ~~interface~~ character will explain the fault to the player.

135. (Currently amended) The console as claimed in claim 128, wherein the character is arranged to appear on a bank of consoles in a coordinated manner ~~to perform system functions~~.

136. (Original) The console as claimed in claim 135, wherein the character appears simultaneously on all of the consoles in a bank.

137. (Original) The console as claimed in claim 135, wherein the character only appears on one of the consoles in the bank at any one time.

138. (Currently amended) The console as claimed in claim 135, wherein the character is animated to progress ~~walk~~ from one console to the next, disappearing from one screen as it appears on the next~~, such that it duplicates the function of a club employee patrolling the bank of consoles and offering bonuses~~.

139. (Currently amended) The console as claimed in claim 135 [[138]], wherein, when a player wins a jackpot, the character announces the win to players playing consoles in the vicinity of the winning player's console.

140. (Currently amended) The console as claimed in claim 135 [[138]], wherein, when the character appears on one of the consoles in a bank of consoles, to award a bonus, the character simultaneously announces its presence to players playing on other consoles in the same bank of consoles.

141. (Currently amended) The console as claimed in claim 128, wherein, the ~~player interface~~ character initiates tournaments by a appearing on each console eligible for the tournament to instruct or advise the player of each of those consoles.

142. (Currently amended) A gaming console having a display ~~means~~, and a game controller ~~control means~~ arranged to control images displayed on the display ~~means~~, the game controller ~~control means~~ being arranged to play a game wherein one or more symbols are randomly selected as a combination of symbols and displayed on the display ~~means~~ and, if a winning combination results, the machine awards a prize, the console being characterized in that an auxiliary display ~~means~~ is provided, and an animated character is periodically displayed on the auxiliary display ~~means~~ to communicate information to the player, the character being independent of and appearing asynchronously with respect to the game being played and arranged to appear superimposed over any other information currently displayed on the auxiliary display at the time the character is displayed.

143. (Original) The console as claimed in claim 142, wherein while the character is displayed on a auxiliary display, there may also be interaction between the character and the main game.

144. (Original) The console as claimed in claim 143, wherein the interaction occurs when awarding bonuses.

145. (Original) The console as claimed in claim 144, wherein the character moves to the main game screen to award a bonus.

146. (Currently amended) The console as claimed in claim 142, wherein the character is associated with an audio output which includes at least one of music and other sound effects to draw attention to the presence of the character ~~, as well as~~ and a voice output to communicate messages to the player.

147. (Currently amended) The console as claimed in claim 142 [[146]], wherein the character ~~also~~ delivers visual messages in the form of symbols and/or text.

148.-149. (Cancelled)

150. (Currently amended) The console as claimed in claim 142, wherein the triggering of the character to appear is achieved by at least one ~~any one or more~~ of the following events:-

(a) a periodic trigger;

(b) a random trigger;

(c) the occurrence of an external trigger event;

(d) the occurrence of one or more specific game states;

(e) the occurrence of one or more specific console states.[[;]]

~~(f) a specific operator activity;~~

~~(g) a specific player activity.~~

151. (Currently amended) The console as claimed in claim 141, wherein the triggering of the character to appear is achieved by at least one ~~any one or more~~ of the following events:

(a) the occurrence of a game state where the player must make a decision where the character may appear, to offer advice on probabilities of various possible outcomes, this trigger may be automatic or prompted by the player pressing a button;

(b) the offering of bonus prizes as incentives to players who have had long non-winning stretches;

(c) the offering game specific bonus features to players who have had a long stretch where the game specific bonus feature has not been awarded;

(d) announcing a bonus game or a series of games awarded to the player;

(e) announcing the winning of a mystery jackpot, either on the winning console, or a console adjacent the winning console;

(f) providing wins in "near-miss" situations by "nudging" a symbol into a winning position;

(g) suggesting the ordering of a taxi for a player who has been observed to have been present for a long period or whose play is erratic and may indicate intoxication;

(h) periodically offer drink or food ordering services; [[or]]

(i) periodically provide public service information and information on services, facilities and entertainment programs offered to patrons; or

(j) advising a player when the console had detected a fault condition in which case the ~~interface~~ character will explain the fault to the player.

152. (Currently amended) The console as claimed in claim 142, wherein the character is arranged to appear on auxiliary displays of each console in a bank of consoles in a coordinated manner ~~to perform system functions~~.

153. (Currently amended) The console as claimed in claim 152, wherein the character appears simultaneously on all of the auxiliary displays of each of the consoles in a bank.

154. (Currently amended) The console as claimed in claim 152, wherein the character only appears on one of the auxiliary displays of the console[[s]] in the bank at any one time.

155. (Currently amended) The console as claimed in claim 152, wherein the character is animated to progress ~~walk~~ from the auxiliary display of one console to the auxiliary display of a next console, disappearing from one auxiliary display ~~screen~~ as it appears on the next ~~, such that it duplicates the function of a club employee patrolling the bank of consoles and offering bonuses~~.

156. (Currently amended) The console as claimed in claim 152 [[155]], wherein, when a player wins a jackpot, the character announces the win to players playing consoles in the vicinity of the winning player's console.

157. (Currently amended) The console as claimed in claim 152 [[155]], wherein, when the character appears on one of the auxiliary displays of the consoles in a

bank of consoles, to award a bonus, the character simultaneously announces its presence to players playing on other consoles in the same bank of consoles.

158. (Currently amended) The console as claimed in claim 142, wherein, the ~~player interface~~ character initiates tournaments by a appearing on each auxiliary display of each console eligible for the tournament to instruct or advise the player of each of those consoles.

159.-219. (Cancelled)

220. (New) A gaming console having a display, and a game controller arranged to control images displayed on the display, the game controller being arranged to play a game wherein one or more random events are caused to be displayed on the display and, if a predefined winning event or combination of events results, the machine awards a prize, the console being characterized in that an animated character is periodically displayed to communicate information to the player, the character being arranged to appear superimposed over any game screen currently displayed at the time the character is displayed, the character appearing to award at least one of a bonus prize, a bonus game and a bonus feature or appearing to dispense or control the dispensing of at least one

of a bonus prize, a bonus game and a bonus feature and the appearance of the character being triggered by the occurrence of at least one game state.

221. (New) A console as claimed in claim 220, wherein the at least one game state comprises at least one outcome of the game.

222. (New) A console as claimed in claim 221, wherein the at least one game outcome is at least one losing outcome.

223. (New) A console as claimed in claim 222, wherein the at least one losing outcome is at least one 'near miss' outcome and the character is arranged to create at least one win outcome from the at least one 'near miss' outcome.

224. (New) A console as claimed in claim 221, wherein the at least one game outcome is at least one winning outcome.

225. (New) A console as claimed in claim 221, where the at least one game outcome is at least one combination of the game.

226. (New) A console as claimed in claim 220, wherein the character appears to award at least two selected from a group including a bonus prize, a bonus game and a bonus feature or appears to dispense or control the dispensing of at least two selected from a group including a bonus prize, a bonus game and a bonus feature.

227. (New) A console as claimed in claim 220, wherein the character appears to award a bonus in a current game or appears to dispense or control the dispensing of a bonus in a current game.